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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /059 W
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P 252255Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3239
INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL
ALL OTHER AMCONSULS CANADA POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 03073

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CA
SUBJECT: FEDERAL ATTACK ON CONCEPT OF ASSOCIATION BETWEEN INDEPENDENT QUEBEC AND REST OF CANADA

1. SUMMARY. FROM HIS REMARKS LAST WEEK IN MANITOBA AND SASKATCHEWAN, IT IS EVIDENT THAT PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU HAS DECIDED TO ATTACK FORCEFULLY WHAT HE OBVIOUSLY REGARDS AS A HIGHLY VULNERABLE POINT IN THE PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ) PLATFORM, NAMELY INDEPENDENCE-ASSOCIATION. PREMIER DAVIS OF ONTARIO LAUNCHED SIMILAR ATTACK IN MAJOR ADDRESS IN TORONTO LAST WEEK. THESE LEADERS APPARENTLY BELIEVE THAT, IF THERE IS NO ASSURANCE ABOUT AN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION BETWEEN AN INDEPENDENT QUEBEC AND REST OF CANADA, PQ WILL BE UNABLE TO CONVINCE MAJORITY OF QUEBECKERS TO SUPPORT POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY IN A REFERENDUM. END SUMMARY.

2. MAIN THEME OF TRUDEAU'S REMARKS, WHICH WERE CLEARLY INTENDED NOT ONLY FOR WESTERN CANADIANS BUT ALSO FOR QUEBECKERS, WAS THAT THE PQ IS TRYING "TO CON YOU" INTO BELIEVING AN INDEPENDENT QUEBEC WILL ESTABLISH AN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION WITH THE REST OF CANADA AND "EVERY-
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BODY WILL BE JUST AS HAPPY AFTER AS BEFORE". LEVESQUE, HE SAID, CAN ONLY WIN A REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE IF NON-QUEBECKERS SHOW SUPPORT FOR CONCEPT OF ASSOCIATION OR IF THEY ADOPT A "LET QUEBEC GO" ATTITUDE. PEOPLE THROUGHOUT COUNTRY SHOULD TELL PQ LEADERS THAT, "IF YOU WANT TO IMPROVE SITUATION OF PEOPLE IN QUEBEC, IF YOU THINK YOU NEED A BETTER DEAL, IF YOU'VE GOT SOME BETTER

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PROPOSITION, IF YOU'VE GOT SOME CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES YOU WANT TO SEE AMENDED, LET'S HEAR ABOUT THEM, LET'S SIT DOWN, WE'LL TALK WITH YOU, WE'RE INTERESTED", BUT IF "YOU WANT TO BUST UP THE COUNTRY, WE DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT".

3. IT MAY NOT BE A COINCIDENCE THAT PREMIER DAVIS OF ONTARIO MADE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME POINT LAST WEEK TO THE EMPIRE CLUB OF ONTARIO. SPECIFICALLY, DAVIS DECLARED "IT WOULD BE FOOLHARDY FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC TO BELIEVE IT COULD HAVE BOTH INDEPENDENCE AND ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION WITH THE REST OF CANADA". THIS COMMENT (QUEBEC L68), PROBABLY EVEN MORE THAN TRUDEAU'S REMARKS, SEEMED TO IRRITATE PQ PREMIER LEVESQUE WHO HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN COUNTING HEAVILY ON A SYMPATHETIC AUDIENCE IN ONTARIO TO THE INDEPENDENCE-ASSOCIATIDN CONCEPT. IN RESPONSE, LEVESQUE SAID: "LIKE MYSELF AND MR. TRUDEAU, MR. DAVIS WILL GO THE WAY OF ALL FLESH EVENTUALLY, AND WE DON'T SPEAK FOR ETERNITY".

4. COMMENT: LEVESQUE'S ASSUMPTION OR HOPE SEEMS TO BE THAT, REGARDLESS OF WHAT TRUDEAU AND OTHERS MAY SAY, PEOPLE IN ONTARIO AND ATLANTIC PROVINCES WILL SUPPORT OUT OF SELF-INTEREST AN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION BETWEEN AN INDEPENDENT QUEBEC AND REST OF CANADA. PROBLEM FOR PQ IS THAT IT STANDS LITTLE CHANCE OF WINNING A REFERENDUM UNLESS THERE IS STRONG ASSURANCE FROM REST OF COUNTRY THAT IT WILL ACCEPT ASSOCIATION ONCE INDEPENDENCE IS DECLARED. (RECENT POLL BY MCGILL PROFESSOR MAURICE
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PINARD SHOWED THAT ABOUT 32 PERCENT OF QUEBECKERS WERE SYMPATHETIC TO INDEPENDENCE-ASSOCIATION CONCEPT BUT ONLY 16 PERCENT WOULD SUPPORT PURE AND SIMPLE SOVEREIGNTY FOR QUEBEC.) TRUDEAU AND DAVIS ARE MAKING CLEAR THAT THEY ARE OPPOSED TO PROVIDING ANY SUCH ASSURANCE ABOUT AN ASSOCIATION AFTER INDEPENDENCE. ENDERS

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